

WI-352
Sharptown
Public and private

Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

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In 1792 John Robertson patented "Robertson's Delight" for 300 acres and within two years started to sell small plots to others. Listed in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax Assessment is Wilson Badley, who owned a parcel of land "situate at Sharp Town on Nanticoke river about 6 miles from Vienna." Wilson Badley owned a single story frame dwelling that measured 24' by 16' and near it was an 8' by 8' frame milk house.

Like many rural towns across the lower Eastern Shore, commercial and economic success along with extensive building or rebuilding occurred during the mid nineteenth century. Reflective of Sharptown's first major period of economic success is a small collection of mid nineteenth century dwellings, a few of which stand along Main Street. Indicative as well of solid community development is the formation of churches within

the town proper. The members of the Asbury Methodist Episcopal and Mt. Vernon Methodist Protestant churches decided to locate within the town during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Mt. Vernon Methodist congregation, known as Harmony Chapel, purchased a half-acre parcel of "Robertson's Delight" in 1844 on which a single-story frame church had been erected shortly before. The Asbury Methodist Episcopal congregation acquired another parcel, a portion of "Royal Exchange," in 1832 and it was located on the east side of Main Street.

Much of Sharptown's history and economic success is tied to shipbuilding, which began in earnest during the early nineteenth century by Matthew Marine. The deep channel of the Nanticoke River and the plentiful supply stout timbers for masts and keels coupled with the need for sound ships for commerce and transportation across the Chesapeake and beyond provided the impetus for a shipbuilding concern in Sharptown. Shipbuilding in Sharptown, as a vital part of its economy, lasted about one hundred years; beginning around 1818 and ending with the bankruptcy of the Eastern Shore Shipbuilding Company in 1919.

Within this hundred-year span, a particularly prosperous period of construction and development occurred after the Civil War. The best measure of the town's expansion by the third quarter of the nineteenth century is provided through the Sharptown town map published in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas in 1877. Clearly depicted on the map is a crowded waterfront and main street with the marine

railway of R. M. L. Elzey and Bro. at the east edge of the town limits and the ferry, commercial wharves, stores along with private residences mixed together within the four or five-block expanse of developed waterfront. Located back from the river along Main Street and several side streets were dozens of private dwellings along with the two churches and the town's two schools.

Representing Sharptown's period of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century prosperity are streets that are lined with Victorian dwellings exhibiting a diversity of symmetrical and asymmetrical floor plans embellished with a variety of decorative treatments. Pilastered corners and bracketed eaves distinguish several houses that date to the mid nineteenth century, while turned post porches, fishscale shingled gables, and sawnwork decorated eaves constitute much of the exterior finishes liberally used during the 1880s and 1890s. After the turn of the century, architectural taste remained tied to Victorian Queen Anne style dwellings until the late 1910s when Colonial Revival and bungalow house forms became popular.

MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME: Sharptown Survey District

MHT INVENTORY NUMBER: WI-352

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA

1. Historic Period Theme(s): Architecture
Commerce
2. Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore
3. Chronological/Development Period(s): Agricultural-Industrial Transition
1815-1870
Industrial-Urban Dominance
1870-1930
4. Resource Type(s): Single-family dwellings
Churches
Store buildings

**Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

**MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Survey No. WI-352
Magi No.
DOE ___yes ___no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Sharptown

and/or common Sharptown Survey District

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district

state _____ county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Various owners

street & number _____ telephone no.:

city, town _____ state and zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Wicomico County Courthouse folio

city, town Salisbury state MD 21801

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

7. Description

Survey No. WI-352

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Sharptown, Maryland is located in the northernmost corner of Wicomico County on a ridge of land bordering the Nanticoke River. Principal highway access to Sharptown is provided by the Mardela Springs-Sharptown Road (MD Route 313). A branch of MD 313 circles the south and east sides of Sharptown and crosses the Nanticoke River. Other less traveled routes from adjacent Sussex County, Delaware include MD Route 348 from the southeast and the Sharptown-Delaware Line Road (Wicomico County Road 479) from due east.

Sharptown is defined by a network of grided streets with Main Street (an extension of MD 348) serving as the principal north/south avenue. Adjacent north/south streets to each side include Ferry Street, Railway Avenue, and Taylor Street on the east and School Street to the west. Oriented on right-angles to these principal avenues are a series of east/west streets. Little Water Street parallels the Nanticoke for a short distance east of Main Street, while Water Street is one of the principal thoroughfares along the entire riverfront. Other principal east/west avenues include Church Street, 4th Street and State Street.

The historic housing stock of Sharptown dates from the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century; including approximately two-hundred and fifty (250) individual resources that form a potential town-wide historic district. The oldest structures in town include a handful of modest single-story or two-story, one-room or side hall/parlor plan dwellings trimmed with distinct references to Greek Revival stylistic influence. Corner pilasters are one of the most obvious exterior references. A mixture of Greek and Italianate influence is represented by the use of neoclassical pilasters and Victorian eave brackets which frame the principal elevations. One of a handful examples representing this stylistic mixture is the Major Twiford house (WI-345) on Main Street. Another example of a mid 19th century house that was later incorporated into a major rebuilding effort is the William H. Knowles house (WI-347) at the intersection of Main and State streets. The Knowles house, one of the most elaborate in Sharptown, reflects two distinct eras in the commercial prosperity of the village; the mid 19th century (c. 1850-60) and the period stretching from 1880 to 1920.

The houses in Sharptown are generally supported on low brick foundations without cellars, and the exteriors are covered with plain weatherboard siding that in most cases has been covered with vinyl, aluminum or asbestos shingles. Roofs of varying pitches have been covered in asphalt shingles. A wide variety of eave decoration is found throughout town. The treatments range from boxed cornices trimmed with Victorian brackets to extended eaves with exposed rafter ends, to intricate or modest sawnwork decoration. Turned post porches with late 19th century decoration exist on many of the houses and represent some of the more significant surviving architectural fabric.

(Continued)

8. Significance

Survey No. WI-352

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

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¹ Ruth T. Dryden, *Land Records of Wicomico County, Maryland 1666-1810*. Family Line Publications, 1992.

² Federal Direct Tax Assessment, Barren Creek Hundred, Particular List of Lands, Wilson Badley, 1798.

7.1 DESCRIPTION

Sharptown Survey District

Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

The commercial buildings that define the former business district include four store buildings and one bank. Three of the stores are large two-story rectangular frame structures erected during the late 19th century. (See Cooper Store Building, WI-341; Bennett Store Building, WI-344; and Twilley Store Building, WI-352) Similar to the houses of the period, the stores are trimmed with modest late Victorian decoration. The old Eastern Shore Trust Company building, an early 20th-century brick bank, is one of the most distinctive commercial structures to remain in the business district.

Perhaps the best known cultural fixture in Sharptown is the Firemens' Carnival, which occupies a sizable tract of land at the south end of town at the intersection of Main Street (MD 348) and Joe Morgan Lane. The carnival complex is dominated by two large octagonal pavilions that are flanked by orderly rows of concrete block and frame concession buildings. (See WI-357)

8.1 SIGNIFICANCE

Sharptown Survey District, WI-352

Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

Methodist Episcopal congregation acquired another parcel, a portion of "Royal Exchange," in 1832 and it was located on the east side of Main Street.

Much of Sharptown's history and economic success is tied to shipbuilding, which began in earnest during the early nineteenth century by Matthew Marine.³ The deep channel of the Nanticoke River and the plentiful supply stout timbers for masts and keels coupled with the need for sound ships for commerce and transportation across the Chesapeake and beyond provided the impetus for a shipbuilding concern in Sharptown. Shipbuilding in Sharptown, as a vital part of its economy, lasted about one hundred years; beginning around 1818 and ending with the bankruptcy of the Eastern Shore Shipbuilding Company in 1919.⁴

Within this hundred-year span, a particularly prosperous period of construction and development occurred after the Civil War. The best measure of the town's expansion by the third quarter of the nineteenth century is provided through the Sharptown town map published in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas in 1877.⁵ Clearly depicted on the map is a crowded waterfront and main street with the marine railway of R. M. L. Elzey and Bro. at the east edge of the town limits and the ferry, commercial wharves, stores along with private residences mixed together within the four or five-block expanse of developed waterfront. Located back from the river along Main Street and several side streets were dozens of private dwellings along with the two churches and the town's two schools.

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³ John E. Jacob, Jr. *Salisbury and Wicomico County: A Pictorial History*, Donning Company, Virginia Beach, Va., 1981, p. 156.

⁴ *Ibid.*

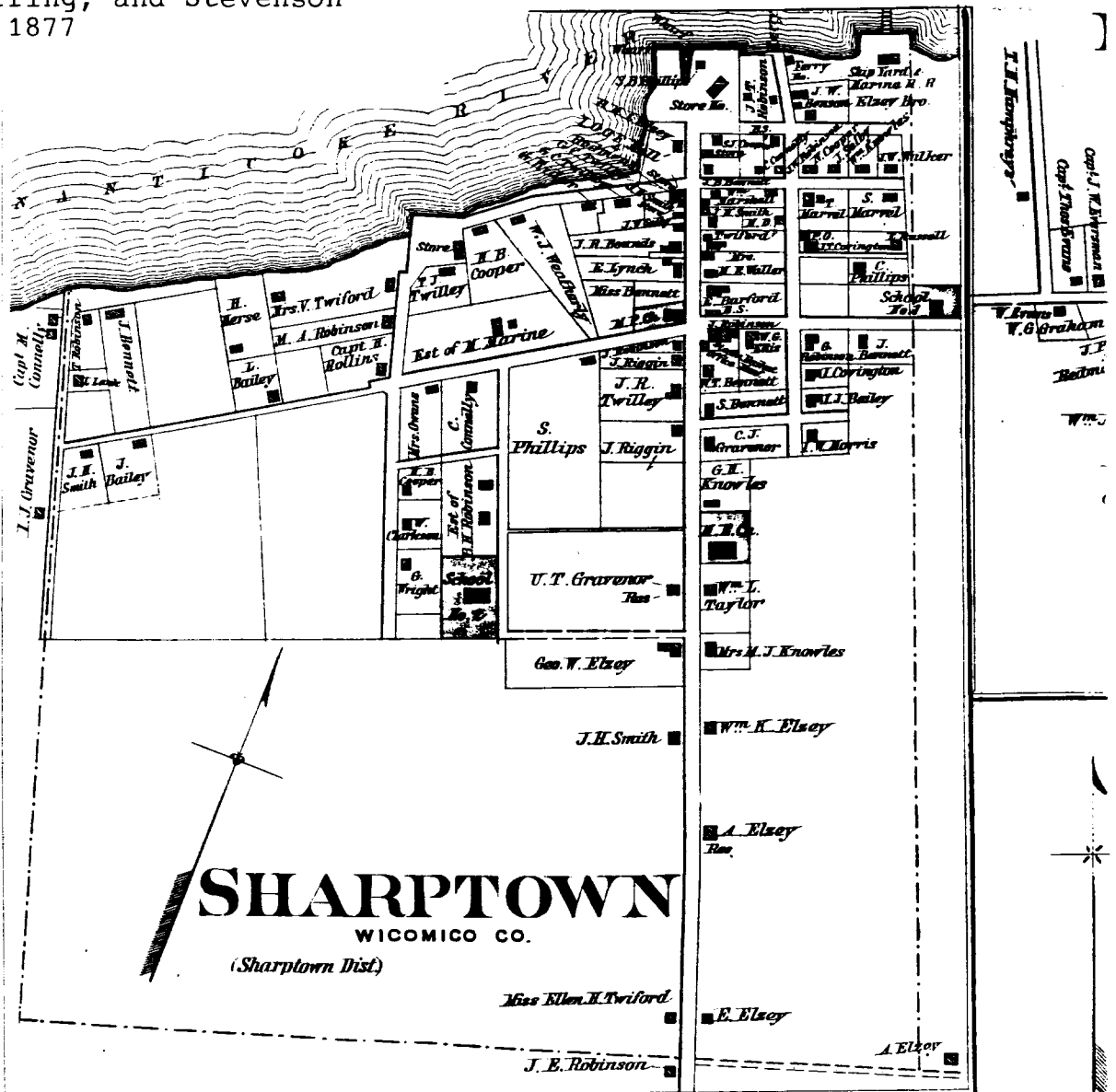
⁵ John L. Graham, ed. *The 1877 Atlases and Other Early Maps of the Eastern Shore of Maryland*, Wicomico County Bicentennial Committee, p. 21.

8.2 SIGNIFICANCE

Sharptown Survey District

Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

The boundaries of the Sharptown survey district are coincidental with the town boundaries, which incorporates an area that includes approximately two-hundred and fifty (250) historic resources that define the district. The boundary was extended south to the edge of MD Route 313 so that the complex of the Firemen's Carnival Grounds would be included. The survey district is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

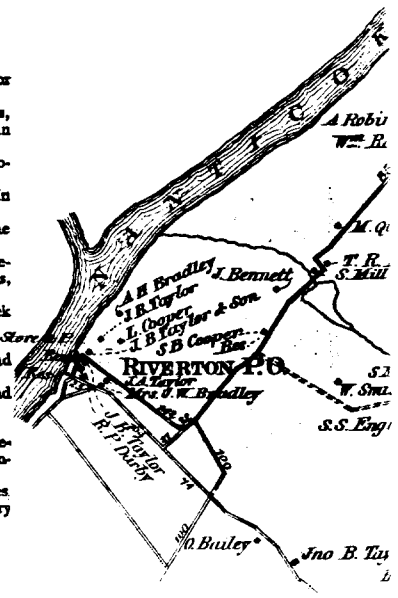


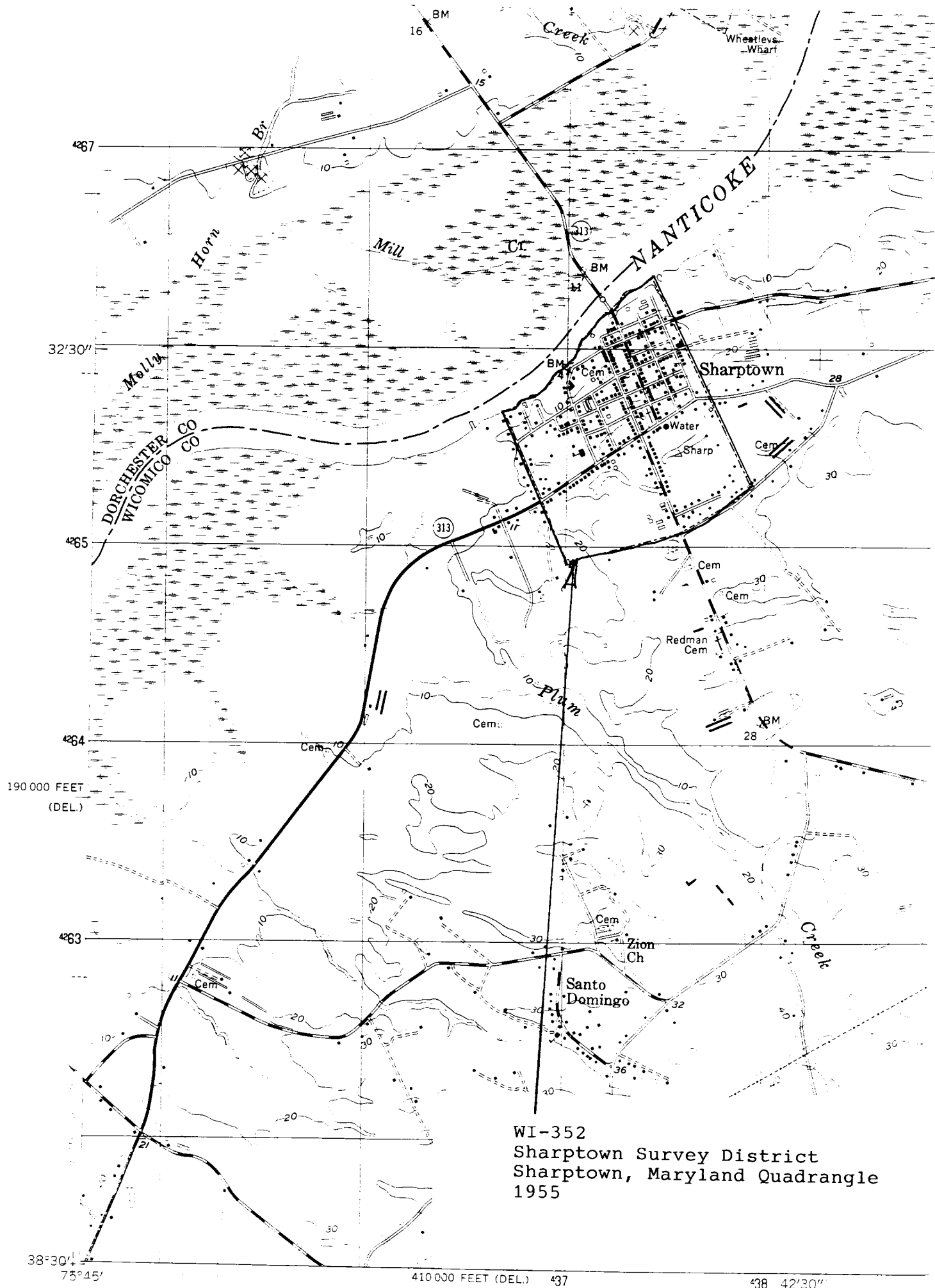
SHARPTOWN BUSINESS REFERENCES.

JOHN H. SMITH, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and a General variety of Goods.
THOS. J. TWILLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
J. R. TWILLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions, and a variety of Goods too tedious to mention.
S. J. COOPER, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country town.
JNO. ROBINSON AND BRO., Manufacturers of Fruit Crates and Baskets, Grape and Peach Baskets and Boxes, Deck Plugs, Trunnel Wedges, &c. Also Wood and Iron Turning, Scroll Sawing, Surface Planing, &c., done to order.
EDWARD BURFORD, Blacksmith. Ship and Country Smithing done to order.
WESLEY CLARKSON, Dealer in Groceries and Whiskies at the Wharf, Sharptown.
JOHN B. TAYLOR AND SON, Dealers in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and general Merchandise, Riverton Wicomico Co., Md.
JOHN W. ROBINSON, Ship-carpenter and Proprietor of Smith-shop. All kinds of work both ship and country, done to order.
R. M. L. ELZEY AND BRO., Proprietors of the Sharptown Marine Railway. Ship-building, Repairing, Graving, &c., done at the shortest notice. All kinds of Material furnished at reasonable rates.
C. J. GRAVENOR, Ship-carpenter and Sail-maker.
W. I. J. PHILLIPS, Ship-carpenter.
JOSEPH H. MANN, Physician and Surgeon.
RICHARD P. DARBY, County Commissioner, Riverton.
J. B. & J. E. TAYLOR, Dealers in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.

BARREN CREEK BUSINESS REFERENCES.

LEVIN M. WILSON, Farmer and Tax Collector for Wicomico Co.
THOMAS B. TAYLOR, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries and all Kinds of Goods usually kept in a Country Store.
J. B. ARMSTRONG, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, &c.
L. M. VINCENT, Wheelwright. All Works in his line done to order.
E. S. BOSTON, Blacksmith. All Work in his line done neatly and to order.
JOHN H. BACON, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, and all goods usually kept in a country store.
J. W. PHILLIPS, Proprietor of "Barren Creek Springs Hotel."
W. C. MASTERS, Physician and Surgeon.
W. J. WEATHERLY, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.
THOS. J. WINDSOR, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.
A. E. ACWORTH, Teacher and Farmer.
A. E. CALLAWAY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
J. W. BRADLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
ISAAC L. ENGLISH, Teacher and Farmer.
ALBERT M. BOUNDS, School Commissioner.
ROBERT L. LLOYD, Ship-Carpenter.
ROBERT W. HOWARD, Saloon-Keeper.





WI-352
 Sharptown Survey District
 Sharptown, Maryland Quadrangle
 1955